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**Environment and sustainable development: protection of global climate for present and future generations of mankind**

# Outcome of the third session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

## Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to submit to the General Assembly, pursuant to the request in its resolution 52/199 of 18 December 1997, the attached note by the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

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# Annex

## Protection of global climate change for present and future generations of mankind

1. The General Assembly at its fifty-second session requested the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to report to the General Assembly at its fifty-third session (see resolution 52/199). This report is in response to that request.

### Outcomes of the Conference of the Parties at its third session

2. The third session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention was held in Kyoto from 1 to 11 December 1997. The most significant outcome of the session was the Kyoto Protocol to the Convention, which has since been signed by over 50 States and, at the time of writing, ratified by one. The Convention commits the industrialized countries[a] to take the lead in limiting and reducing emissions of the greenhouse gases that are causing global warming. The overall result of the Protocol, if all of the signers ratify and implement it, will be to reduce their collective emissions of carbon dioxide and five other greenhouse gases by some 5.2 per cent below their 1990 levels in the period 2008–2012. This figure translates into a real reduction of some 20 per cent below the point that emissions from these countries would otherwise have reached by 2010, according to the latest projections. Individual national targets were differentiated to reflect national circumstances. The result will be a significant departure from historical emission trends and an important first step towards the Convention's secretariat goal of stabilizing atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases at safe levels. Further emission reductions by the industrialized countries and a shift to lower emission paths in developing countries with large and growing economies will be required to attain this goal in the course of the next century.

3. In addition to these environmental benefits, the Protocol also stands to have long-reaching economic impacts. It has sent a signal to industry that new ways of doing business are in order. The main means for achieving the Kyoto targets will be domestic action in industrialized countries to improve efficiency in the use of energy, introduce new technologies and influence consumption patterns. However, the Protocol also recognizes innovative economic instruments, including emission credits and emission trading, as means to achieve emission limitations, and contains the seeds of new markets in emissions that will take a place alongside traditional markets in commodities and financial instruments. Among these innovations, the Clean Development Mechanism will be a tool to promote sustainable development in developing countries, while assisting industrialized country Parties to fulfil their emission commitments.

### Preparations for and potential outcomes of the Conference of the Parties

4. The fourth session of the Conference of the Parties will be held in Buenos Aires from 2 to 13 November 1998. In preparation for the session, the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice and the Subsidiary Body for Implementation were convened in Bonn from 2 to 12 June 1998. Outcomes of the sessions included a process initiated by the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice to enable decisions under the Kyoto Protocol about land-use change and forestry issues, and the conclusion of the work of the Ad Hoc Group on Article 13 concerning a multilateral consultative process for the resolution of questions regarding implementation.

5. There is a general view that at its fourth session the Conference should seek to advance both the implementation of commitments in the Convention and the preparations for the entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol. In regards to the Convention, these outcomes could include agreement on practicable steps on transfer of technology to developing country Parties; a decision on the status of the Global Environmental Facility and on further policy guidance to the financial mechanism; a decision on a process for the consideration of non-annex I communications; a first agreement on action regarding adverse impacts on developing countries of climate change and of response measures (articles 4.8 and 4.9 of the Conference); and finalization and adoption of the decision recommended by the Ad Hoc group on article 13. In regards to the Protocol, outcomes of the session could include action to follow up on the articles dealing with domestic achievement of annex I emission targets and on advancing the implementation of existing commitments of all Parties; decisions on operational elements of the flexibility mechanisms and a schedule for further decisions required to complete the operational design

of those mechanisms; a decision to agree on basic rules for the Clean Development Mechanism by the Conference at its fifth session; and decisions on intergovernmental and secretariat work on emissions-accounting systems and on compliance procedures.

## Administrative arrangements

6. Since the establishment of the permanent secretariat of the Convention on 1 January 1996, the United Nations has provided it with administrative support services in accordance with the Secretary-General's secretariat note on institutional arrangements for the permanent secretariat (FCCC/CP/1995/5/Add.4), which was provisionally accepted by the Conference of the Parties at its first session (see decision 14/CP.1, para. 3).

7. Under these arrangements, administrative functions are performed partly by the United Nations, through the United Nations Office at Geneva, and partly by the financial management and administration subprogramme of the secretariat. However, it was foreseen that the arrangements would evolve to cover the administrative needs resulting from the decentralized functioning of the secretariat. As the secretariat has expanded and its needs have become more complex, it has become evident that it must undertake more administrative responsibilities in Bonn.

8. As requested by the Assembly in its resolution 50/115, a review of these arrangements was conducted jointly by the Secretariat of the United Nations and the secretariat of the Convention starting in 1997. Although it proved not possible to complete the work in that year, a preliminary report on the review was submitted by the Secretary-General to the Assembly at its fifty-second session (A/52/667). A further report will be submitted to the Assembly at its current session.

*Notes*

[a] Developed countries members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development plus Central and Eastern European countries with economies in transition.